

# Why are Minnesota communities adopting tobacco-free park policies?

## Most Minnesotans support tobacco-free park and recreation policies.

A 2004 University of Minnesota survey found that 70% of Minnesota residents support tobacco-free park and recreation areas.

## Policies provide consistency among community athletic facilities and groups.

The majority of community sporting events are held at either city or school district athletic facilities, and nearly all Minnesota school districts prohibit tobacco use on their entire grounds. Also, many community athletic associations have policies but use city recreation facilities and would benefit from a city-wide policy.

## Policies reduce litter and maintenance costs.

In a 2004 survey, 58% of Minnesota park directors in cities with policies reported cleaner park areas since the policy was enacted.

## Free signs and policy assistance.

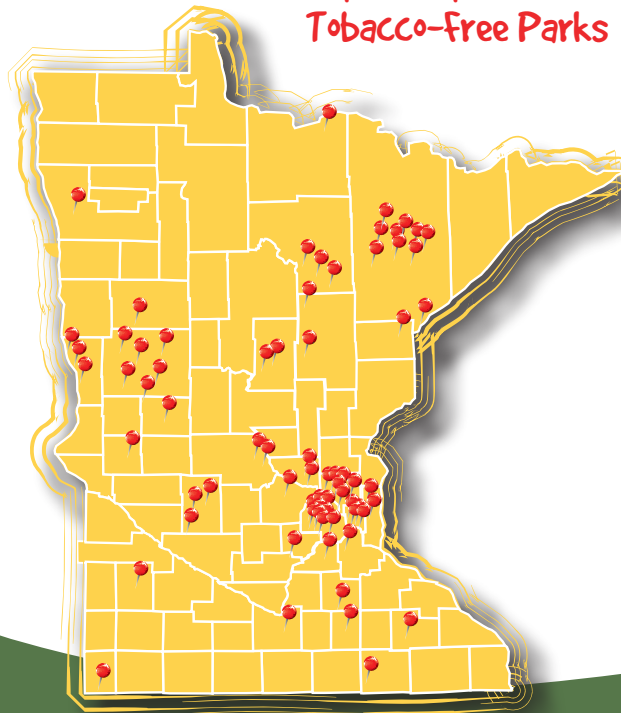
TFYR provides free assistance with policy development and free metal signs to communities that adopt comprehensive policies. Contact TFYR at (651) 646-3005 or [tfyr@ansrmn.org](mailto:tfyr@ansrmn.org) for details.



# Tobacco-free Parks and Recreation Areas are Working

Cities throughout Minnesota have adopted tobacco-free policies for outdoor park and recreation areas with positive results. These policies are largely self-enforcing with a combination of signage and community education about the policy. Policies are the most effective and the easiest to understand when they cover an entire park system.

## Cities with Tobacco-free Parks



# Tobacco-free Parks and Recreation



# Play Tobacco Free!

# Tobacco-free Parks and Recreation Areas Make Sense

Each year in Minnesota, more than 14,000 young people under the age of 18 become new daily smokers. More astonishingly, 123,000 youth under the age of 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking. Supporting tobacco-free parks and recreation areas makes sense because it sends the right message—that tobacco use is unhealthy and an unnecessary behavior.

## **Parks promote healthy activities.**

The purpose of community park systems is to promote community wellness, and tobacco-free policies fit with this idea.

## **Children model adult behaviors.**

Children who see adults using tobacco in a family-friendly place like a park or recreation area may think smoking is acceptable and are

more likely to mimic the behavior. Tobacco-free policies encourage young people to make healthy choices. The more tobacco-free environments a community provides, the fewer opportunities for youth to start smoking.

## **Secondhand smoke is dangerous.**

Secondhand smoke near children, youth and adults participating in or watching recreational activities is unhealthy and harmful to their health. Secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted.

## **Cigarette litter is harmful.**

Cigarette butts and packaging are a very common form of litter found in parks and recreation areas. Discarded cigarettes pollute the land and water and may be ingested by toddlers, pets, birds or fish.

## Here's What You Can Do in Your Community

Join your local tobacco-free coalition or call your public health agency to find out how you can help create tobacco-free outdoor park recreation areas.

You can also help educate your community about why tobacco-free recreation areas make sense:

- Tell friends and neighbors why you support tobacco-free recreation areas and ask them to join you.
- Gather support from organizations who regularly use community recreation areas.
- Distribute educational materials at community events.
- Write a letter to your local elected city officials.
- Volunteer to speak to elected officials about this issue.

For more information or to join a group working on tobacco-free parks and recreation initiatives in your community, contact:

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